

HARSHA

THE GREAT RULER OF THANESHWAR

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If Harsha is remembered till this day as a great ruler, it is not only because he was a brave military leader, but also because he was a man of noble impulses, a great patron of learning and letters and he had great scholars like Banabhatta, Mayura and Divakara in his court.

72 Harsha came to occupy the throne of Thaneshwar at a very critical moment in its history. His father had died and his elder brother had been murdered by a powerful enemy. The neighbouring kingdom, Kannauj, ruled by Harsha's brother-in-law, had been overrun. Harsha not only surmounted these difficulties, but raised the small kingdom of Thaneshwar into the most powerful kingdom in Northern India.

Banabhatta's "Harshacharita" gives a detailed account of Harsha's life till he rescues Rajyashri. We know more about the political and economic conditions of his times from the account of Hiuen Tsang, who visited India during his reign.

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HARSHA

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HAR
HAR
MAHADEV!



ABOUT 1,400 YEARS AGO, THANESHWAR, A POWERFUL KINGDOM IN NORTHERN INDIA WAS RULED BY PRABHAKAR VARDHAN. DURING THIS PERIOD THE HUNS HAD STARTED HARASSING THE PEOPLE OF THANESHWAR. SO THE KING SENT HIS ABLE SONS TO PUNISH THEM.

AFTER A BITTER FIGHT, THE
HUNS RETREATED.

VICTORY TO PRINCE
RAJYAVARDHAN! VICTORY
TO PRINCE HARSHA!



HALT! IT IS GETTING
DARK. LET US STOP
FOLLOWING
THEM.

YES, BROTHER!
LET US
CAMP HERE.



THE HUNS DID NOT ATTACK AGAIN.

ALL RIGHT,
HARSHA!

THERE HAS
BEEN NO FIGHTING
FOR SEVERAL DAYS.
I THINK I'LL GO
ON A HUNT.



WHILE HUNTING FAR-
AWAY FROM THE CAMP,
HARSHA SAW
SOMEBODY
RIDING
TOWARDS HIM.

HE SEEMS
TO BE IN A
GREAT
HURRY.

PRINCE HARSHA,
YOUR FATHER IS VERY
ILL. HE WANTS TO SEE
YOU AND PRINCE
RAJYA.

I'LL GO TO
HIM. YOU
INFORM MY
BROTHER.


BOTH PRINCES RUSHED TO THANESHWAR, BUT THEY WERE TOO LATE.

YOUR FATHER
WAS A
NOBLE KING.

A FEW DAYS LATER-


PRINCE RAJYA, YOU WILL NOW
HAVE TO SIT ON THE
THRONE.

OH, NO!
LET HARSHA
BE THE KING.




PRINCE MARSHA
IS RIGHT,
SIR.

CERTAINLY NOT.
BEING THE ELDER BROTHER,
IT IS YOUR RIGHT
AND DUTY TO RULE.



LONG LIVE
KING
RAUYAVARDHAN


MY
BROTHERS
ARE YOUNG AND
INEXPERIENCED PLEASE
GUIDE THEM.



IF YOU
WISH, I WILL GO
AND MEET THEM
AFTER THE SPRING
FESTIVAL.

RAUYASHRI, THEIR SISTER, WAS WORRIED. SHE TALKED
TO HER HUSBAND GRAHAVARMAN, THE KING OF KANNAUJ.

MEANWHILE, DEVGUPTA, THE GREEDY KING OF MALWA
WAS BUSY PLOTTING.

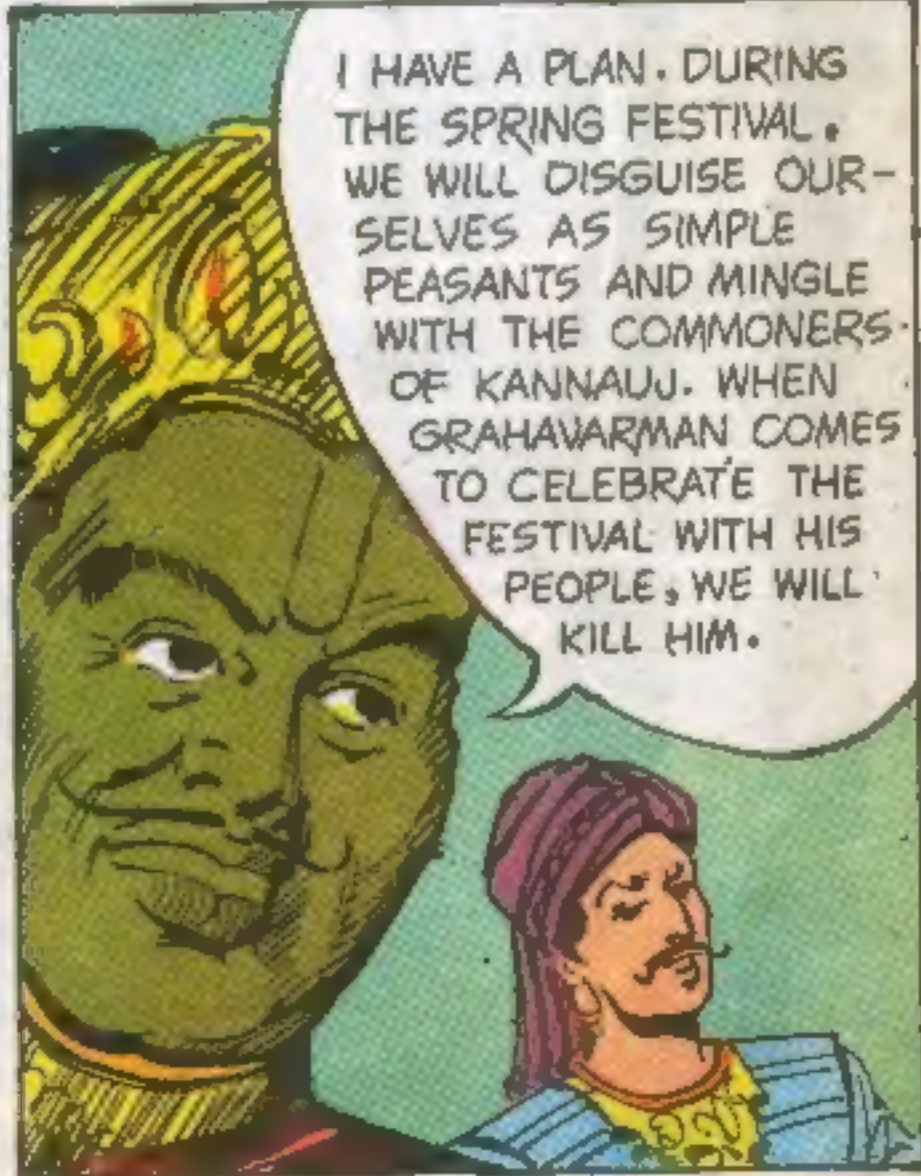


THE TIME
IS RIPE.
WE CAN NOW GRAB
THE KINGDOMS OF
THANESHWAR AND
KANNAUJ.

BUT
THEY ARE
VERY POWERFUL,
SIR.

I KNOW. BUT IF WE KILL GRAHA-
VARMAN, THE INEXPERIENCED
RAJYAVARDHAN WILL NOT BE
ABLE TO DEFEND BOTH
KINGDOMS.

BUT HOW ARE
WE GOING TO KILL
GRAHAVARMAN?



I HAVE A PLAN. DURING
THE SPRING FESTIVAL,
WE WILL DISGUISE OUR-
SELVES AS SIMPLE
PEASANTS AND MINGLE
WITH THE COMMONERS
OF KANNAUJ. WHEN
GRAHAVARMAN COMES
TO CELEBRATE THE
FESTIVAL WITH HIS
PEOPLE, WE WILL
KILL HIM.




ACCORDING TO THEIR PLAN, DEVGUPTA AND HIS SOLDIERS DRESSED IN ORDINARY CLOTHES, MINGLED WITH THE PEOPLE OF KANNAUJ. THEN AS KING GRAHAVARMAN WAS ENTERING A TEMPLE -



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AFTER KILLING GRAHAVARMAN, DEVGUPTA
FORCIBLY CARRIED RAJYASHRI WITH HIM.

HELP!
HELP!



THE NEWS OF DEVGUPTA'S TREACHERY
REACHED RAJYAVARDHAN.

MAHARAJ,
KING DEVGUPTA OF
MALWA, HAS CARRIED AWAY
YOUR SISTER.



DEVGUPTA
HAS INVITED HIS
DEATH.



MAHARAJ,
ALLOW ME TO
ATTACK
MALWA.

NO,
HARSHA!



BEING
THE ELDER
BROTHER
AND THE
KING IT IS
MY DUTY
TO
DO SO.



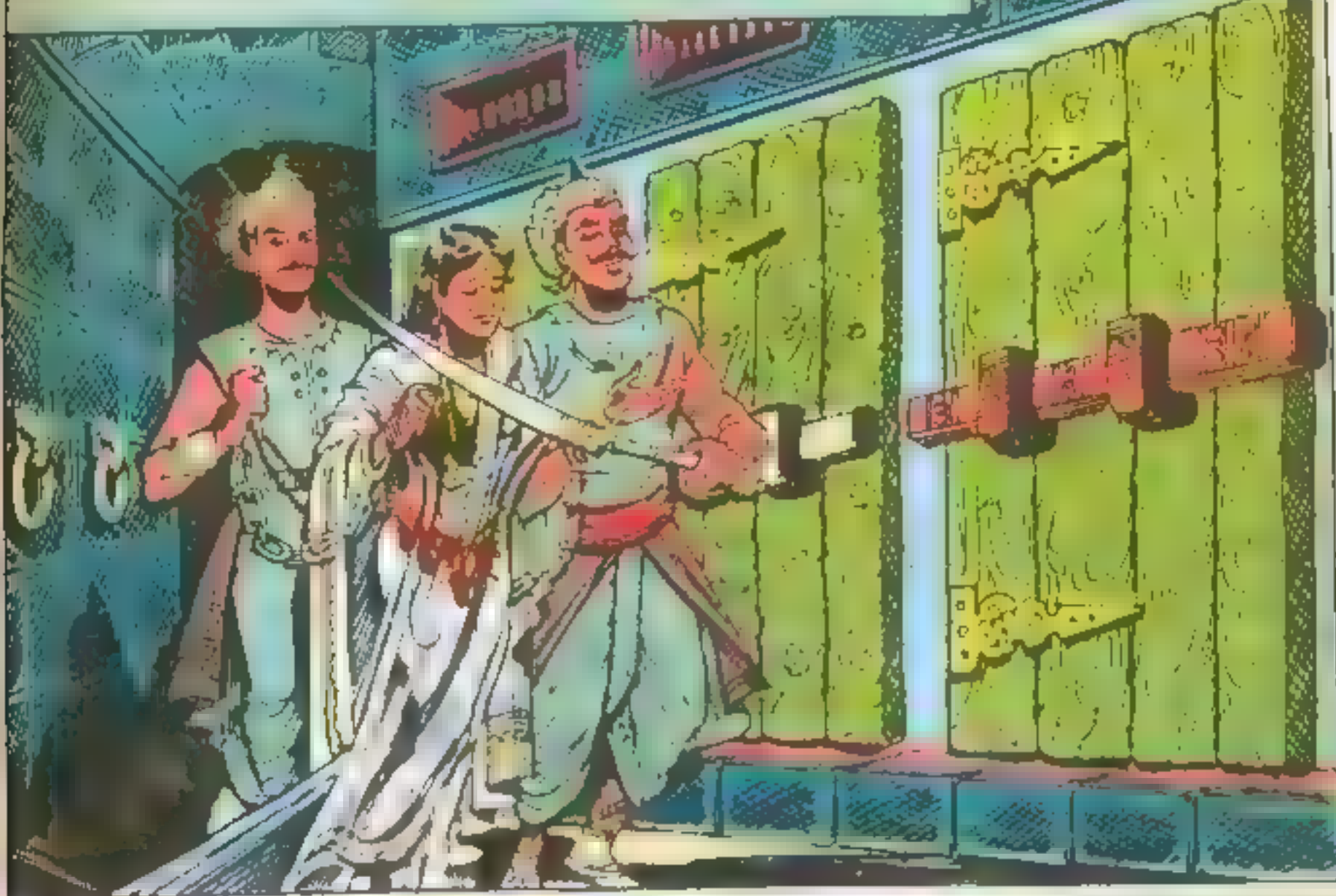
YOU HAVE
BEHAVED
LIKE A
COWARD.

MEANWHILE IN MALWA-

SAY WHATEVER YOU
LIKE. BUT I SHALL
SOON BE THE KING OF
KANNAU AS WELL AS
THANESHWAR.

IMPRISON HER.
LET HER LEARN TO
RESPECT A
KING.

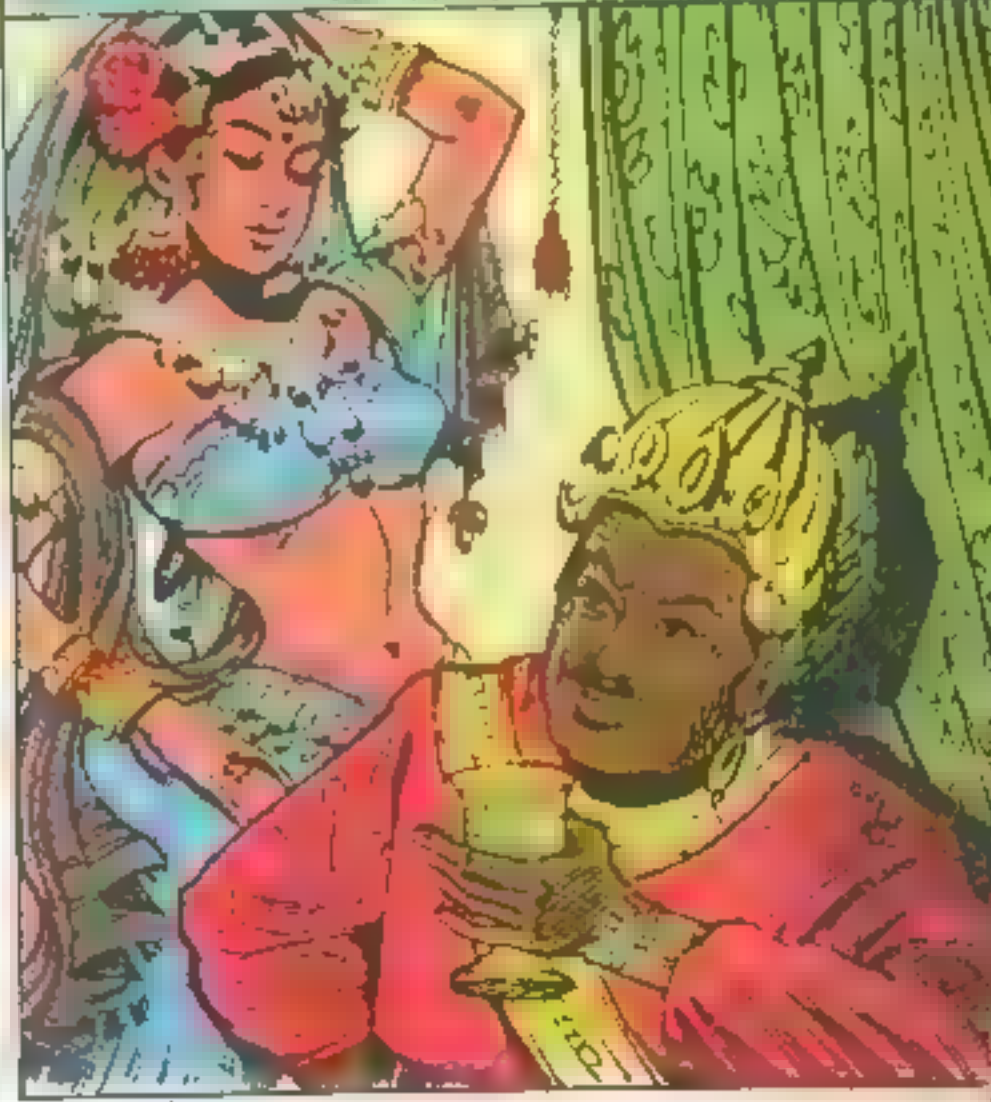
THE SIGHTS IN THE PRISON DISTURBED RAJYASHRI.



THE PAINFUL CRIES OF OTHER PRISONERS AGONISED HER HEART AND SOUL.

WHILE RAJYASHRI WAS SUFFERING MENTALLY, DEVGUPTA WAS ENJOYING HIMSELF.

OH,
MY GOD!



JUST THEN DEVGUPTA RECEIVED A MESSAGE.

RAJYAVARDHAN IS PREPARING TO ATTACK US, SIR!

I EXPECTED THIS. GO AND CALL KING SHASHANK OF GAUD. I WANT TO TALK TO HIM.

VERY SOON DEVGUPTA WAS SCHEMING WITH SHASHANK.

I WILL SHARE HALF OF THE KINGDOMS OF THANE-SHWAR AND KANNAUJ WITH YOU IF YOU HELP ME.

I WILL. WHAT MUST I DO?

WIN RAJYAVARDHAN'S CONFIDENCE AND ACCOMPANY HIM IN HIS ATTACK ON ME.

WHEN THE BATTLE BEGINS, ATTACK RAJYAVARDHAN FROM THE REAR. ONCE HE IS DEAD, WE'VE AS GOOD AS WON.


YOUR PLAN IS EXCELLENT. WE SHALL DEFINITELY SUCCEED.

SO, SHASHANK WITH HIS EVIL INTENTIONS
MARCHED WITH RAJYAVARDHAN TOWARDS MALWA.

I AM GRATEFUL TO YOU
FOR YOUR HELP, KING
SHASHANK. YOU SHALL
ALWAYS BE MY MOST
TRUSTED FRIEND.

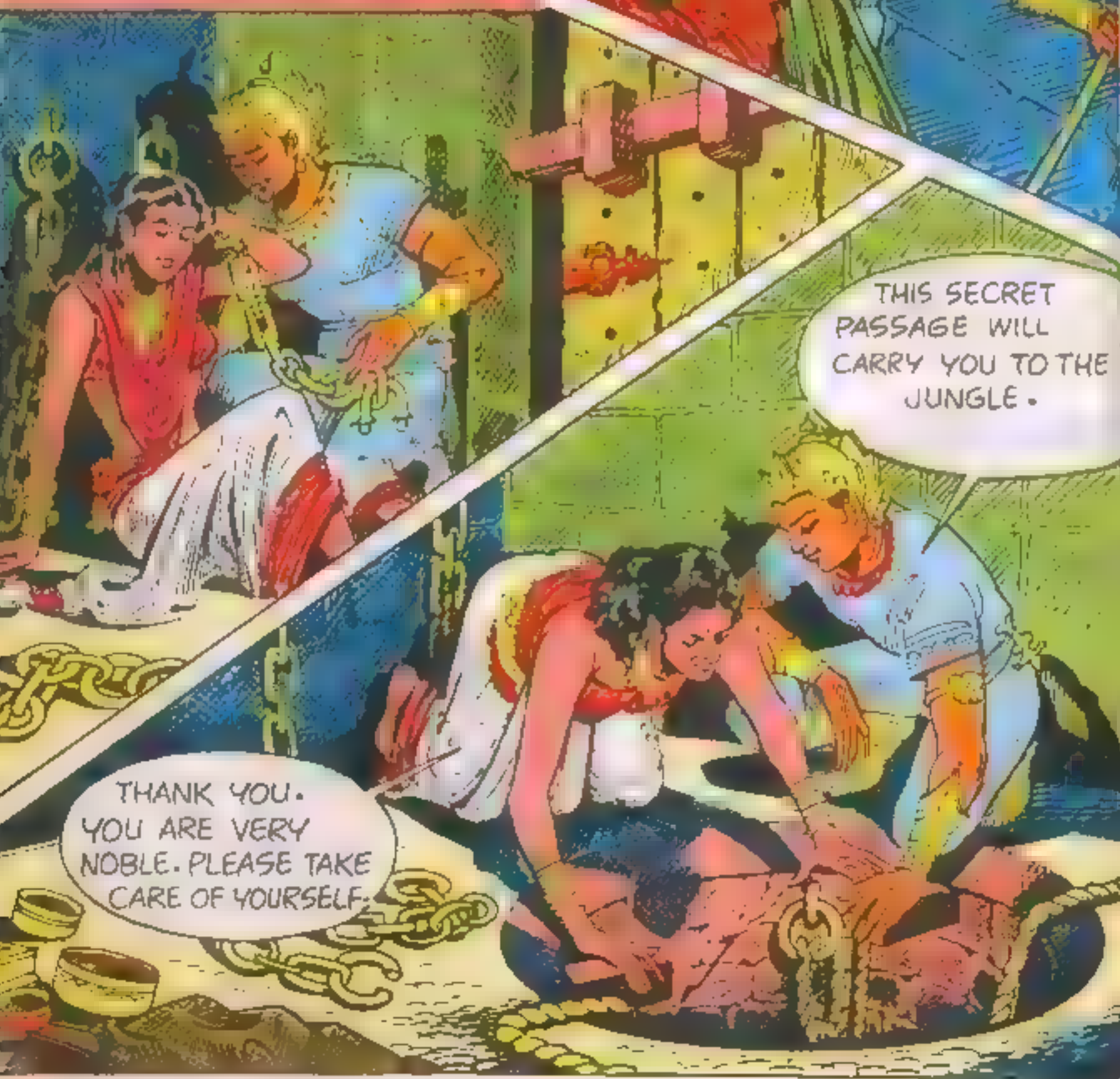
MY PERSONAL GUARDS
SHALL PROTECT YOU
WHILE YOU
FIGHT.

BECAUSE OF THE BATTLE, EVERYTHING WAS DISORGANISED IN DEVGUPTA'S PRISON.



WE NEED ALL THE
SOLDIERS. LEAVE ONLY
ONE MAN TO
GUARD THE
PRISON.

THE SOLDIER LEFT TO GUARD
THE PRISON, POSSESSED A NOBLE HEART.



THIS SECRET
PASSAGE WILL
CARRY YOU TO THE
JUNGLE.

THANK YOU.
YOU ARE VERY
NOBLE. PLEASE TAKE
CARE OF YOURSELF.

THUS RAJYASHRI ESCAPED FROM
DEVGUPTA'S PRISON.




DEVGUPTA'S SOLDIERS WERE PATROLLING
THE JUNGLE, BUT LUCKILY SHE WAS
NOT SPOTTED BY THEM.



FINALLY RAJYASHRI
ESCAPED INTO THE JUNGLE.





MEANWHILE RAJYAVARDHAN FOUGHT FIERCELY. SHASHANK WAS HELPLESS AS HE WAS SURROUNDED BY RAJYAVARDHAN'S PERSONAL GUARDS.



FINALLY RAJYAVARDHAN KILLED DEVGUPTA AND WON THE BATTLE.

VICTORY TO MAHARAJ RAJYAVARDHAN.



SHASHANK WAS VERY UPSET OVER THE DEATH OF DEVGUPTA.

WITH DEVGUPTA'S DEATH, MY DREAMS ARE ALSO SHATTERED.

MEANWHILE, RAJYASHRI WAS
DISTURBED OVER HER FATE.

THERE IS
NOBODY TO
HELP ME.

WHY SHOULD I
LIVE ANY
MORE.

BROTHER
HARSHA!

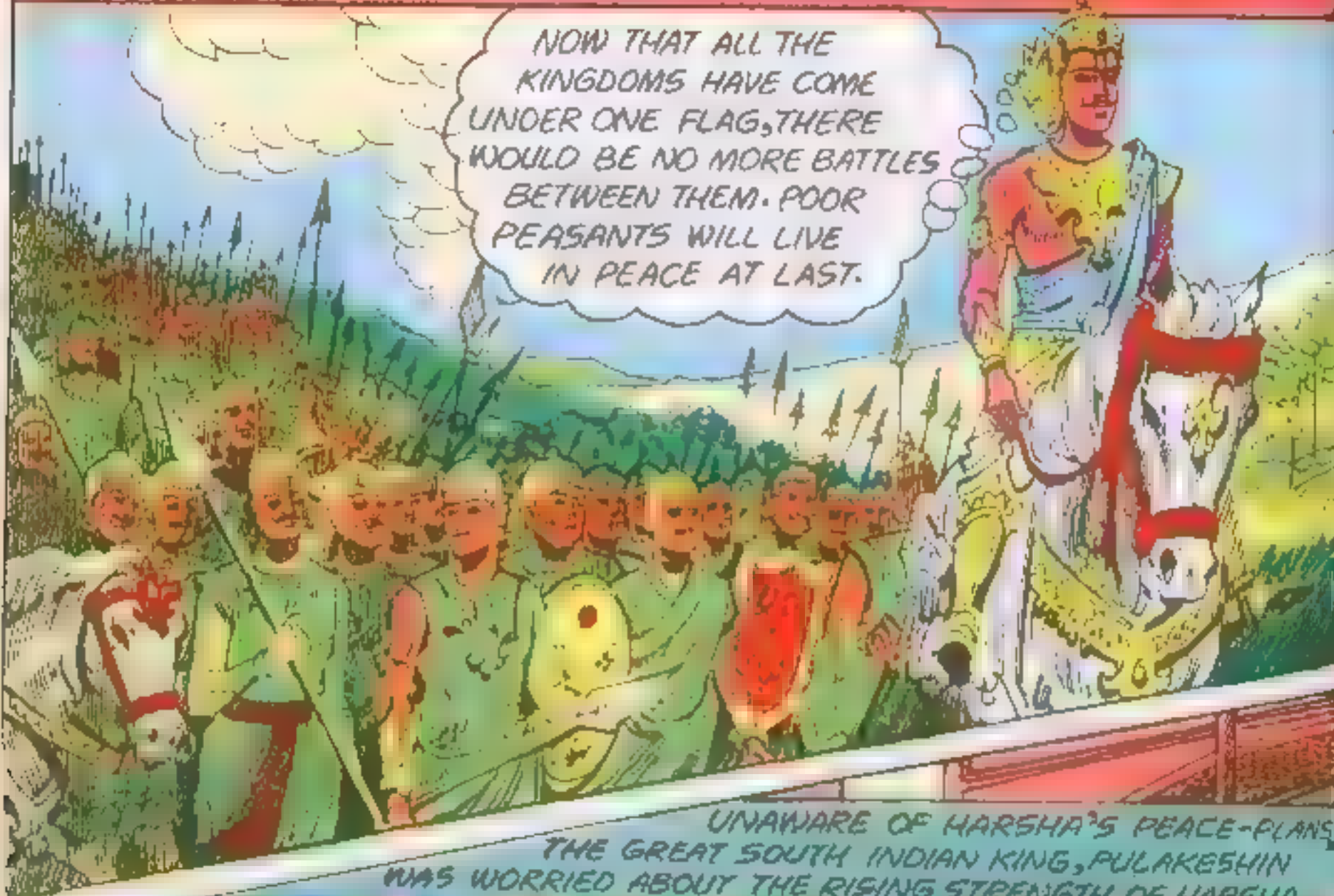
STOP!
SISTER
STOP!

YES,
BUT STILL
OTHERS WOULD
CONTINUE TO
SUFFER, BECAUSE
OF PETTY QUARRELS
BETWEEN DIFFERENT
KINGDOMS.

YOUR
BAD DAYS ARE
NOW OVER,
DEAR
SISTER.


I PLEDGE
THAT I WILL
UPROOT THE
CAUSE OF
THESE SU-
FERING

AND VERY SOON HARSHA CONQUERED THE VARIOUS SMALL KINGDOMS
TO BRING LASTING PEACE IN NORTHERN INDIA.

A king with a crown and a blue and yellow robe sits on a white horse. He is addressing a large crowd of soldiers in green tunics and helmets. In the background, there are green hills and a blue sky with white clouds.

NOW THAT ALL THE
KINGDOMS HAVE COME
UNDER ONE FLAG, THERE
WOULD BE NO MORE BATTLES
BETWEEN THEM. POOR
PEASANTS WILL LIVE
IN PEACE AT LAST.

UNAWARE OF HARSHA'S PEACE-PLANS,
THE GREAT SOUTH INDIAN KING, PULAKESHIN
WAS WORRIED ABOUT THE RISING STRENGTH OF HARSHA.

A king in a blue robe sits on a throne, looking concerned. He is surrounded by advisors in various colored robes. The setting is an ornate palace interior with pillars and a large window.

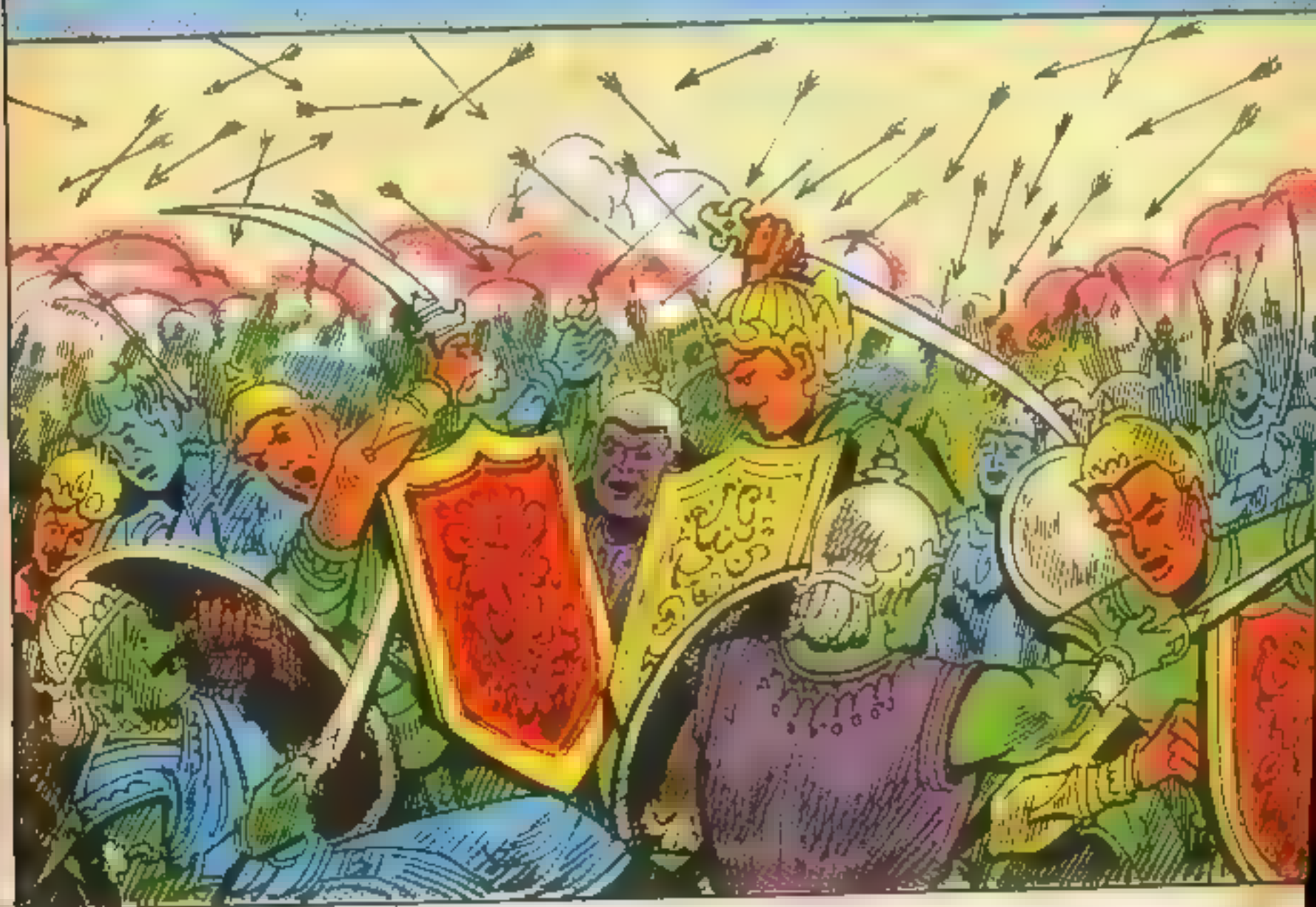
MAHARAJ PULAKESHIN,
HARSHA HAS WON
KINGDOMS AS FAR AS
KATHIAWAR. HE MAY
ATTACK US
ONE DAY.

WE MUST
ATTACK
BEFORE
HE DOES.

HARSHA WAS RETURNING HOME AFTER CONQUERING KATHIAWAR. HIS SOLDIERS WERE TIRED AND EAGER TO REACH HOME.



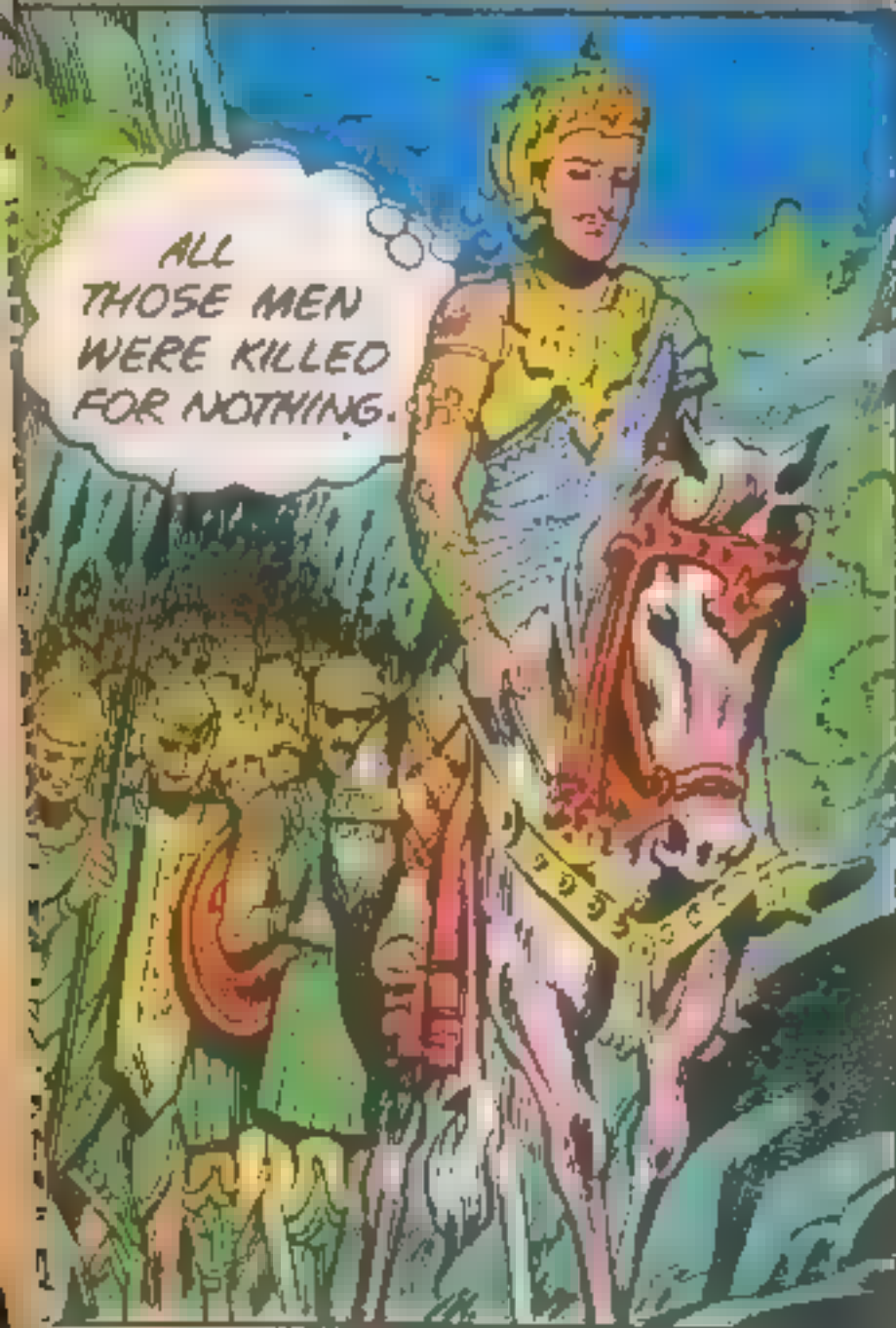
AND AT THAT MOMENT PULAKESHIN ATTACKED HARSHA.



THE FIGHTING CONTINUED FOR SEVERAL DAYS.
LOSSES WERE HEAVY ON BOTH SIDES.



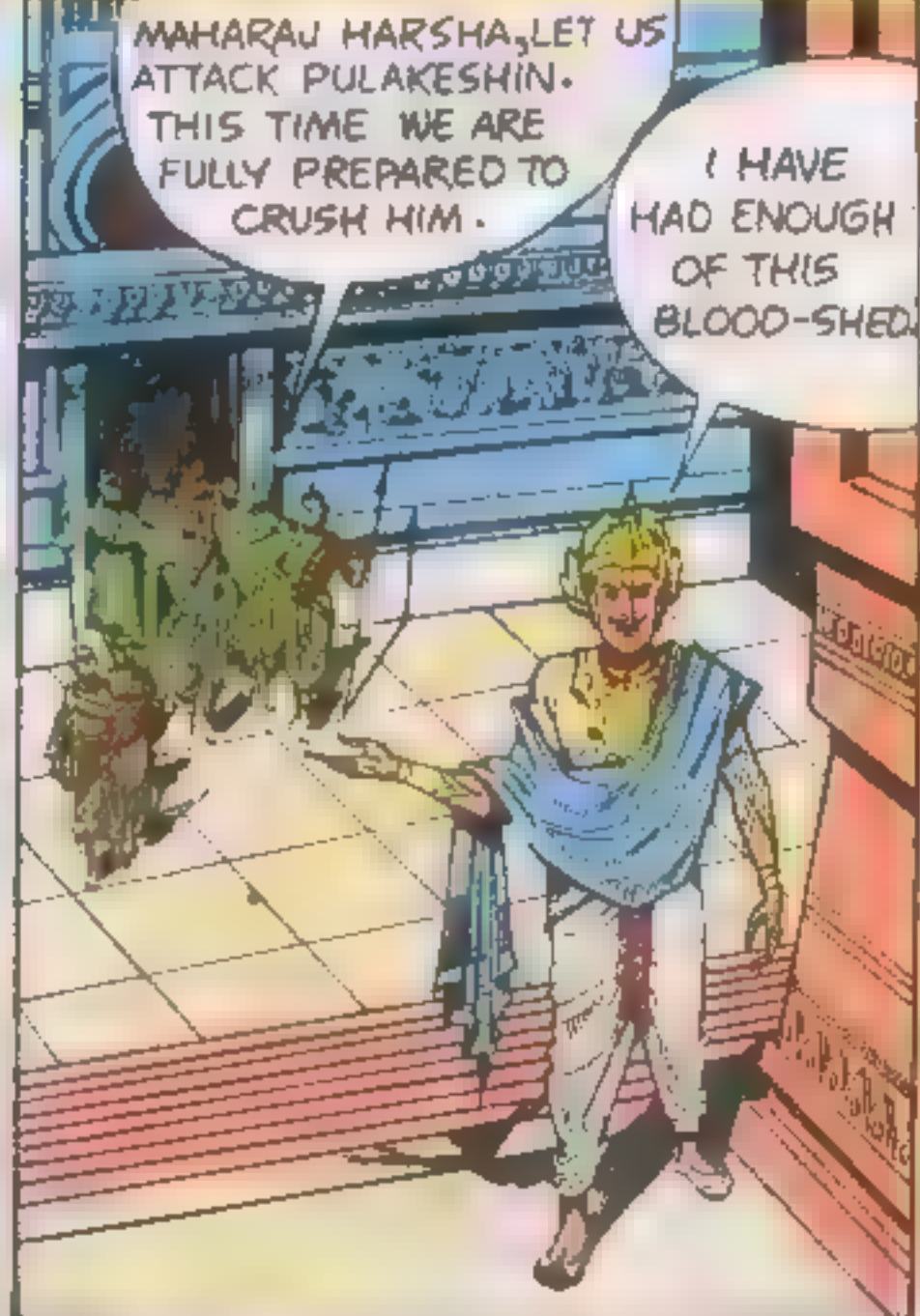
HARSHA'S TIRED SOLDIERS HAD TO
RETREAT. HE WAS VERY SAD.



SOMETIME LATER IN THANESHWAR -

MAHARAJA HARSHA, LET US
ATTACK PULAKESHIN.
THIS TIME WE ARE
FULLY PREPARED TO
CRUSH HIM.

I HAVE
HAD ENOUGH
OF THIS
BLOOD-SHED.



THERE SHALL BE
NO MORE
WARS.

IN FUTURE,
I SHALL USE
MY STRENGTH
TO PROTECT
THE WEAK
AND
THE POOR.



YOU ARE
A NOBLE KING,
MAHARAJ
HARSHA.

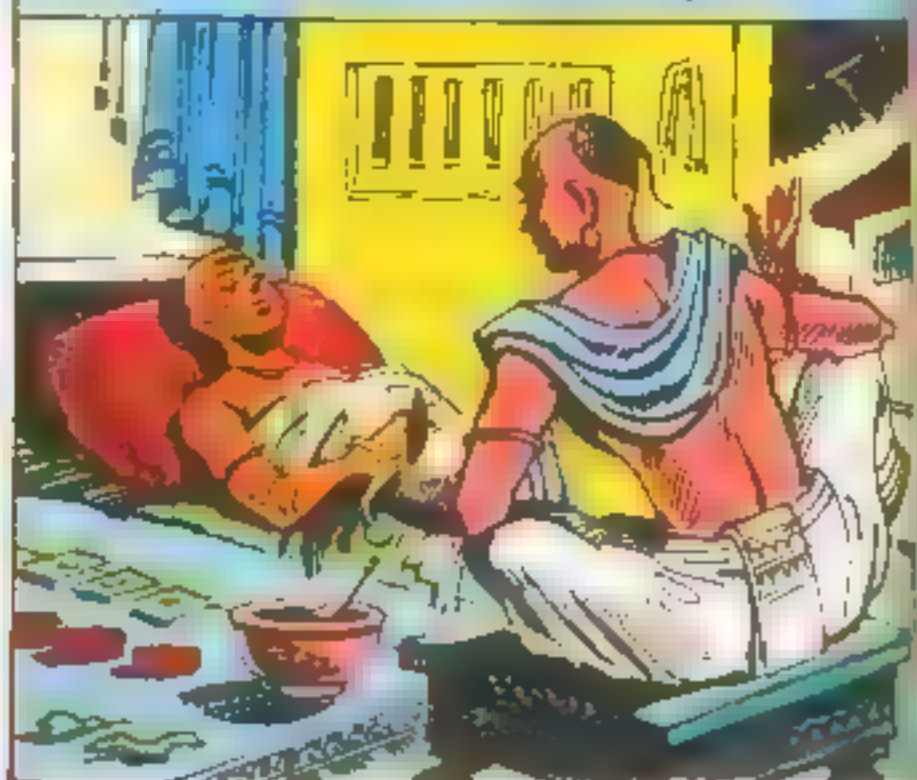
LONG LIVE,
MAHARAJ
HARSHA.



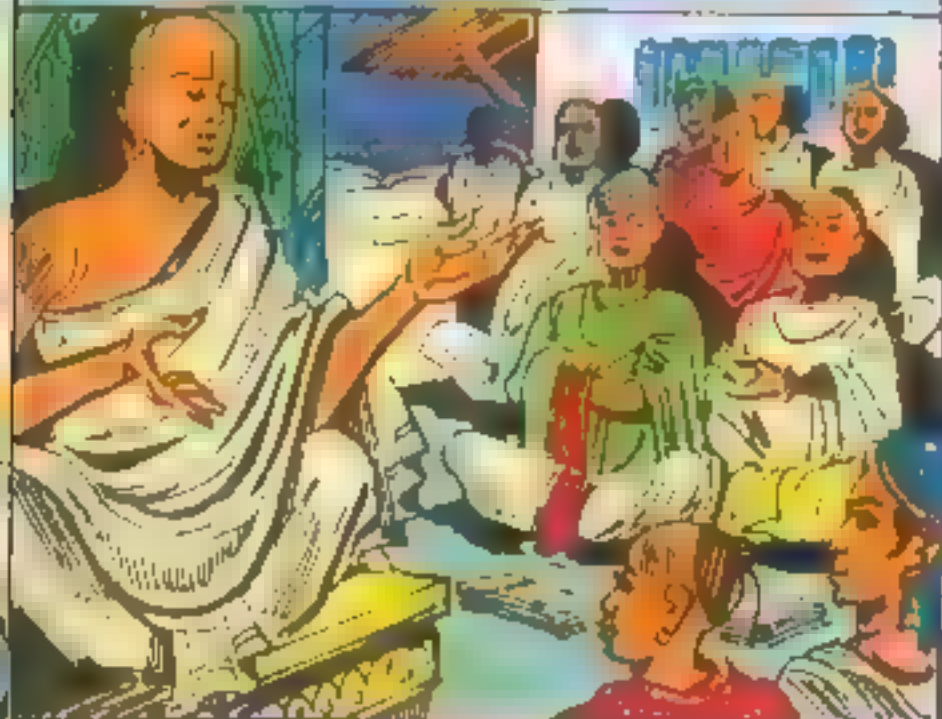
TO FULFIL HIS DREAM, HARSHA GAVE
FINANCIAL HELP TO THE POOR.



HE APPOINTED PHYSICIANS TO TREAT
THE SICK FREE OF COST.



HE HELPED STUDENTS TO PURSUE
THEIR STUDIES.



DURING HIS TIME, TRADERS CAME
FROM AS FAR AS CHINA.



PEOPLE PROSPERED.

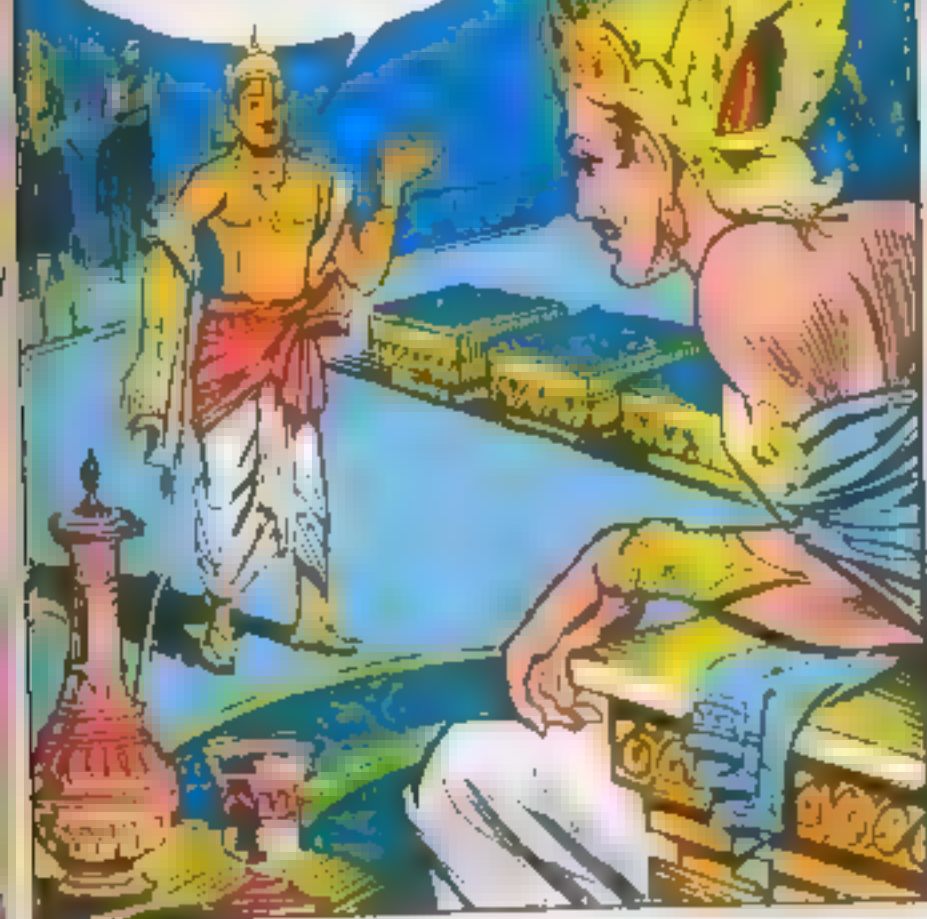


AND FOLLOWERS OF DIFFERENT FAITHS
LIVED IN PEACE AND HARMONY.



DURING THIS PERIOD, HIUEN TSANG, THE FAMOUS CHINESE PILGRIM AND SCHOLAR CAME TO INDIA. AFTER SPENDING SOME TIME IN EASTERN INDIA, HE MET HARSHA.

MAHARAJ, A BUDDHIST MONK WANTS TO SEE YOU. BRING HIM IN.

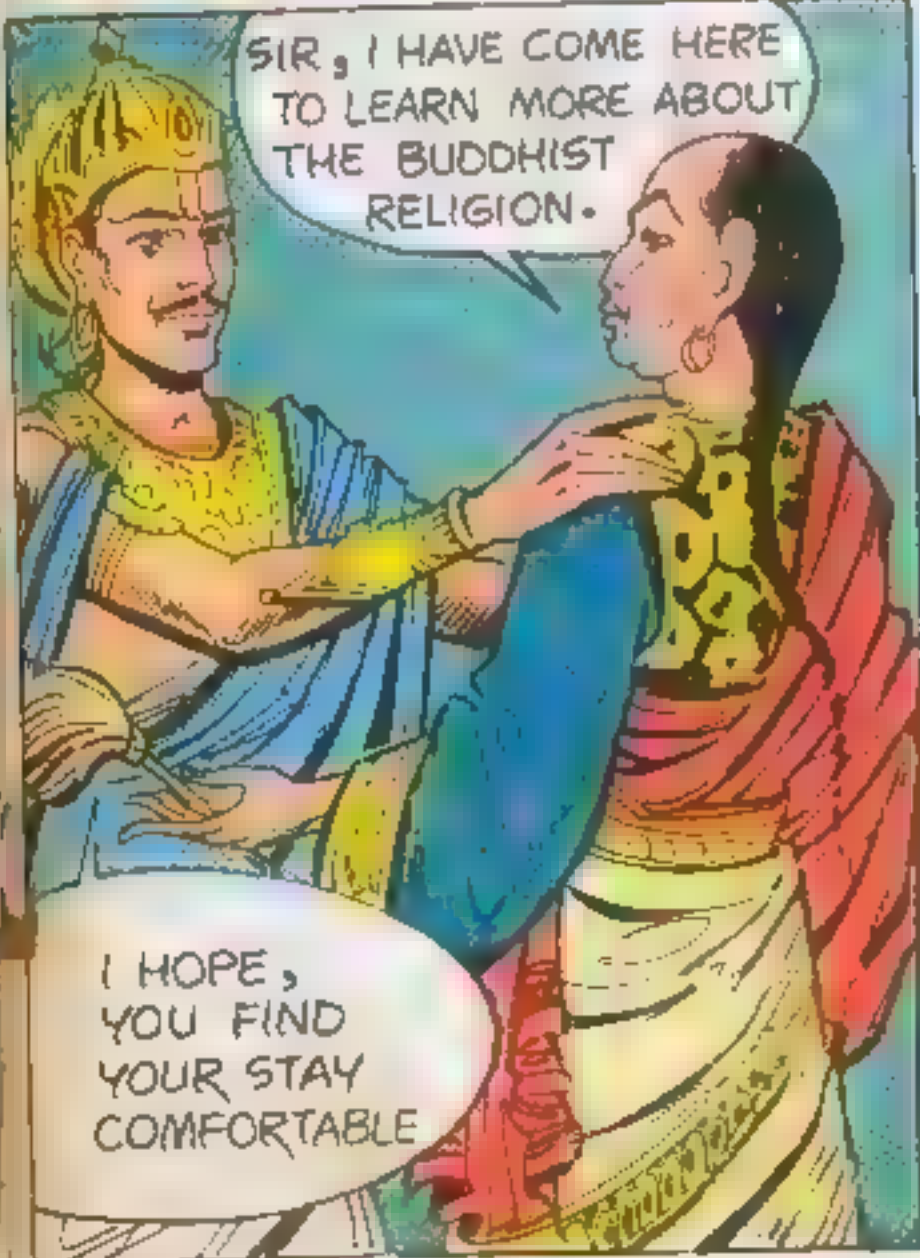


WELCOME, SCHOLAR HIUEN TSANG. I WAS LOOKING FORWARD TO MEETING YOU.



MAHARAJ, I AM HONOURD.

SIR, I HAVE COME HERE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE BUDDHIST RELIGION.



I HOPE, YOU FIND YOUR STAY COMFORTABLE

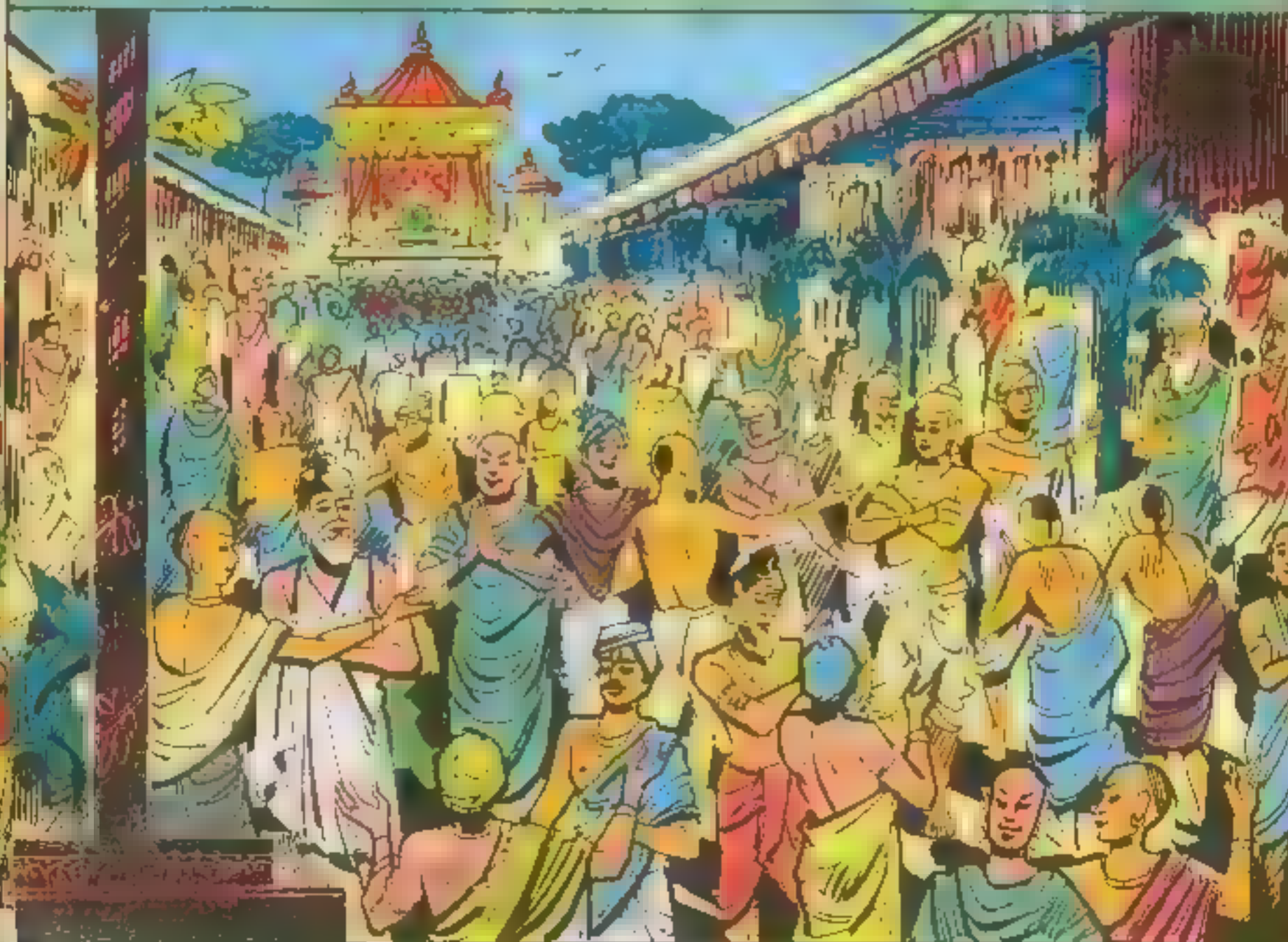
HIUEN TSANG STAYED IN INDIA FOR A FEW YEARS.



DURING HIUEN TSANG'S STAY, HARSHA DECIDED TO HOLD
A SEMINAR ON RELIGIONS.



EMINENT SCHOLARS OF HINDUISM, JAINISM AND BUDDHISM CAME
TO PARTICIPATE IN THE SEMINAR.



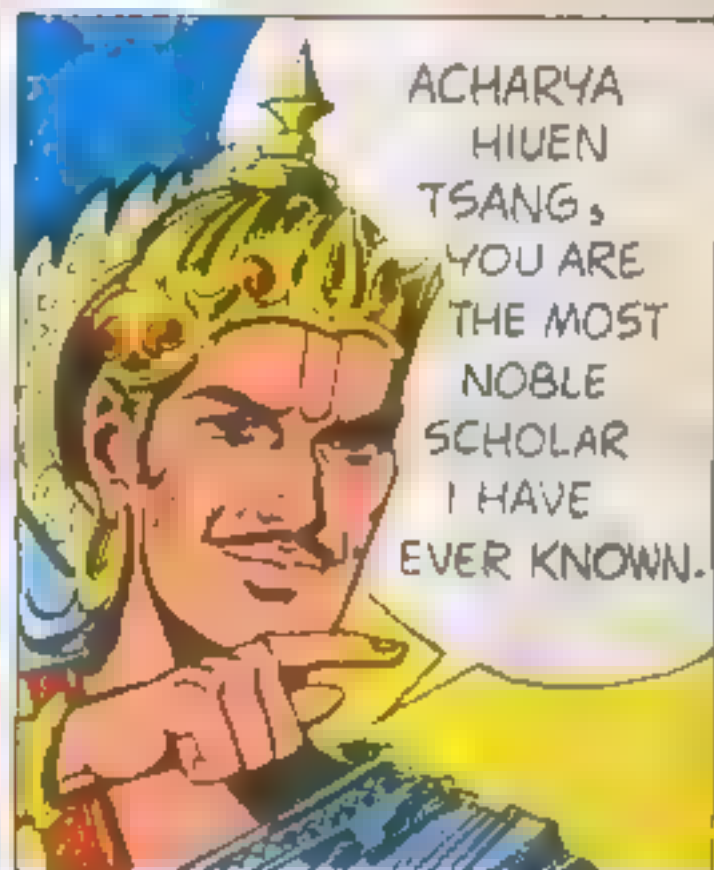
THE SEMINAR CONTINUED FOR SEVERAL DAYS.



HUEN TSANG TOO PARTICIPATED IN THE SEMINAR.



ACHARYA
HUEN
TSANG,
YOU ARE
THE MOST
NOBLE
SCHOLAR
I HAVE
EVER KNOWN.



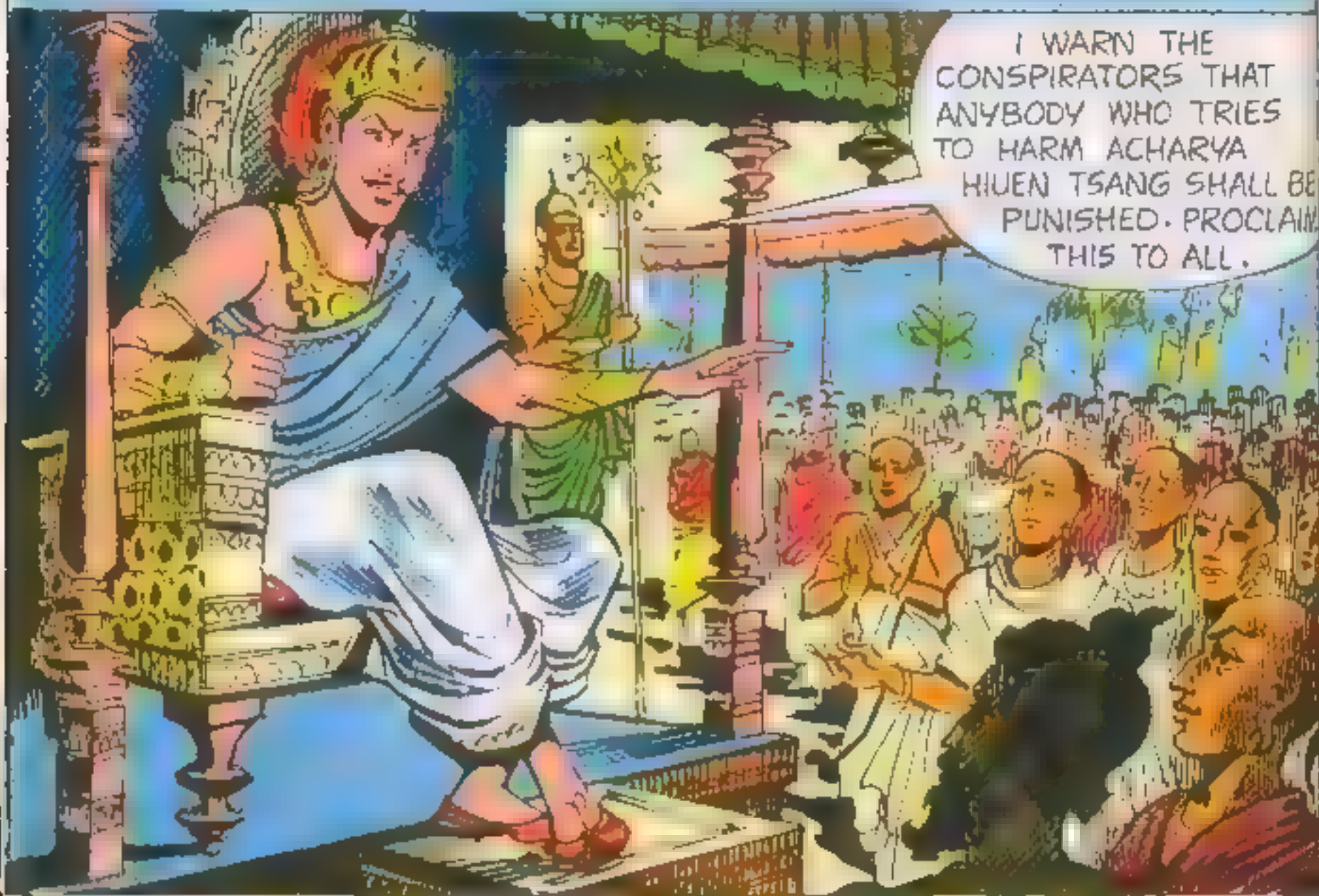
BUT SOME OF THE GREEDY PARTICIPANTS DID NOT LIKE THAT A FOREIGNER SHOULD BE PRAISED BY THEIR KING.

IF HUEN TSANG MAKES
A GOOD IMPRESSION
ON THE KING, WE MAY
NOT GET THOSE RICH
REWARDS, WE EXPECT.



YES,
HE MUST BE
FINISHED BEFORE
HE DOES MORE
HARM.

BUT THIS CONSPIRACY WAS REPORTED TO HARSHA IMMEDIATELY.



I BELIEVE ■
NON-VIOLENCE,
THE POOR AND
THE WEAK
SHALL BE
PROTECTED.
THOSE
WHO PREACH
VIOLENCE
SHALL PAY
FOR IT WITH
THEIR
OWN LIVES.

AS A RESULT OF THIS STERN WARNING,
NOBODY TRIED TO HARM
HIUEN TSANG.

THE SEMINAR IS OVER.
THE SCHOLARS SHOULD
NOW BE PRESENTED
WITH GIFTS.

THE
ARRANGEMENTS
HAVE BEEN MADE,
MAHARAJ!

FROM THE NEXT DAY, HARSHA STARTED PRESENTING GIFTS TO THE SCHOLARS AND PRIESTS OF DIFFERENT RELIGIONS.

PLEASE ACCEPT
THIS SMALL TOKEN
OF MY APPRECIATION.

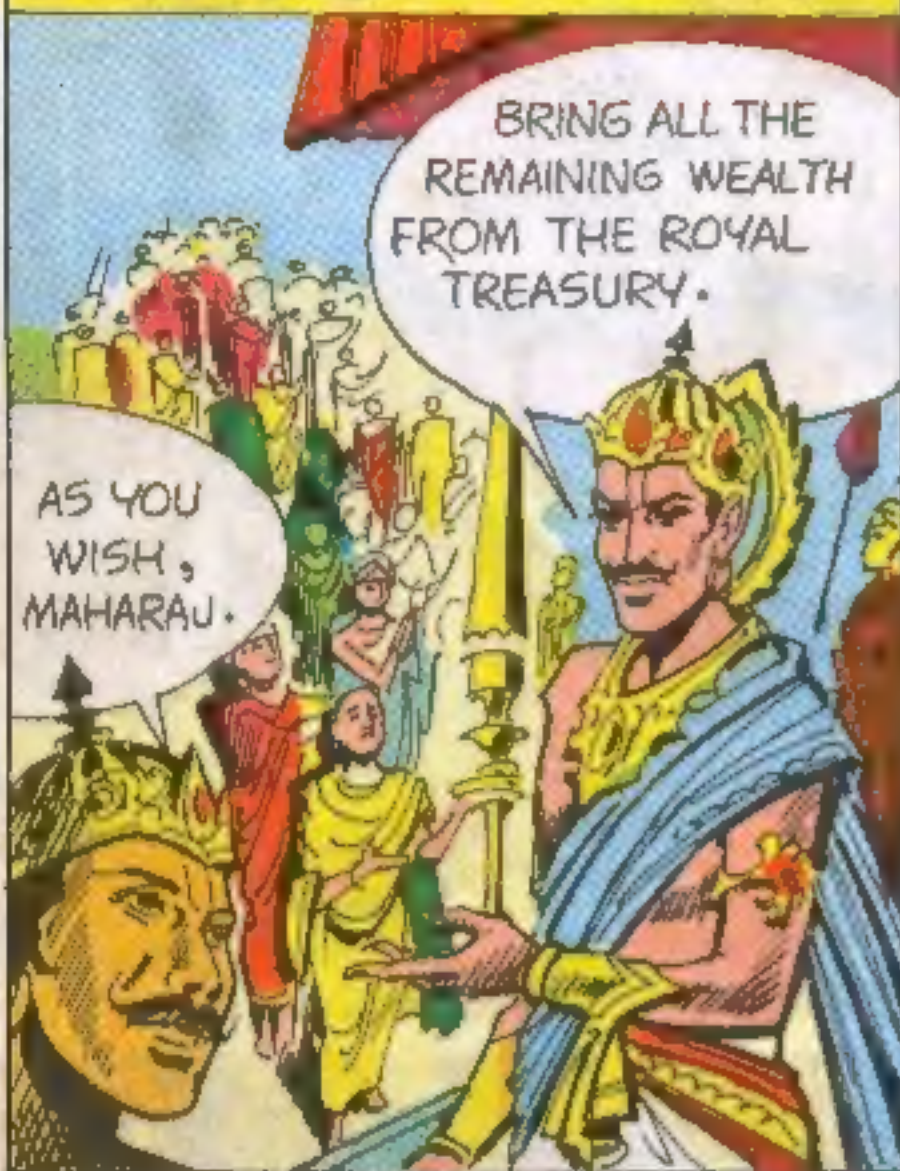
MAY GOD BE
ALWAYS WITH YOU,
KING HARSHA!



THEN CAME THE TURN OF POOR PEASANTS.



SOON THE GIFTS BROUGHT FOR DONATION WERE EXHAUSTED. BUT STILL MANY PEOPLE REMAINED WITHOUT GIFTS.



THE ROYAL WEALTH WAS ALSO GIVEN AWAY BUT EVEN THEN SOME PEOPLE WERE LEFT OUT.



IN THE END ONLY ONE MAN WAS LEFT OUT.





IN THIS MANNER, EVERY FIVE YEARS, HARSHA GAVE AWAY ALL HIS WEALTH TO
THE SCHOLARS, THE PRIESTS AND THE POOR.



AFTER COMPLETING HIS STUDIES, HIUEN TSANG WENT BACK TO CHINA. HE CARRIED WITH HIM MEMOIRS OF HIS VISIT WHICH BECAME WORLD FAMOUS AS TESTIMONIES OF OUR GREAT ANCIENT HERITAGE.

I HAVE KNOWN MANY KINGS BUT THERE IS NONE LIKE HARSHA. I HAVE SEEN MANY COUNTRIES BUT THERE IS NONE LIKE BHARAT. TRULY BHARAT IS A GREAT COUNTRY AND HER GREATNESS LIES IN HER PEOPLE AND IN HER RULERS LIKE HARSHA.

